

Message Text

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PAGE 01 HALIFA 00205 132115Z

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TAGS: ELAB, CA

SUBJECT: NOVA SCOTIA NURSES' STRIKE

1. ONE OF TWO GROUPS OF UNIONIZED NURSES, 1500 IN NUMBER, IN NOVA SCOTIA STRUCK AT TWELVE HOSPITALS THROUGHOUT NOVA SCOTIA ON JUNE 12 TO BACK CONTRACT DEMANDS IN NEGOTIATIONS WITH THE NOVA SCOTIA HOSPITAL ASSOCIATION. FOUR OF HALIFAX MAJOR HOSPITAL STRUCK AND PRACTICALLY ALL HOSPITALS IN CAPE BRETON. IN NOVEMBER 1974 THE UNION SUBMITTED NEW CONTRACT PROPOSALS TO VARIOUS HOSPITALS FOR CONTRACTS WHICH WERE TO TERMINATE DECEMBER 31, 1974. NEGOTIATIONS BROKE DOWN IN MID-FEBRUARY 1975 AND EFFORTS OF CONCILIATOR ALSO CAME TO NAUGHT IN FEBRUARY. AN INDUSTRIAL INQUIRY COMMISSION HEADED BY JUDGE NATHAN GREEN MET UNSUCCESSFULLY WITH UNION ON JUNE 9 THROUGH 12, THE DAY ON WHICH NURSES STRUCK.

2. REASON FOR NURSES ACTION WAS THAT THEIR UNION AND HOSPITAL ASSOCIATION (WHICH REPRESENTS PROVINCIAL GOVERNMENT) MAKING NO PROGRESS AS WAGE DEMANDS AND OFFERS TOO FAR APART. NURSES WANT PARITY WITH ONTARIO NURSES AT 945 DOLLARS A MONTH FROM PRESENT BASIC RATE OF 651 DOLLARS. ASSOCIATION HAS OFFERED INCREASES OF 19 PERCENT FIRST YEAR AND 10 PERCENT SECOND YEAR OF CONTRACT BRINGING WAGES TO 745 DOLLARS THE FIRST YEAR

UNCLASSIFIED

UNCLASSIFIED

PAGE 02 HALIFA 00205 132115Z

AND 852 DOLLARS THE SECOND YEAR.

3. ON JUNE 12 THE LIBERAL GOVERNMENT INTRODUCED LEGISLATION IN THE LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY WHICH WOULD FORCE THE NURSES TO RETURN TO WORK AND WHICH WOULD AT THE SAME TIME PROVIDE FOR BINDING ARBITRATION OF THE CONTRACT DISPUTE. THE PRESIDENT OF THE NOVA SCOTIA NURSES STAFF ASSOCIATION HAS DESCRIBED THE PROPOSED LEGISLATION AS THE "MOST GUTLESS PIECE OF LEGISLATION EVER INTRODUCED IN NOVA SCOTIA" AND ACCUSES THE GOVERNMENT OF PICKING ON ONE OF THE NEWEST AND WEAKEST LABOR GROUPS IN THE PROVINCE TO TRY OUT THIS TYPE OF COMPULSORY BACK TO WORK--ARBITRATION LEGISLATION AS AN AUGURY OF FUTURE GOVERNMENT ACTION WITH OTHER UNIONS.

4. THE PREMIER IN A RADIO COMMENTARY ON JUNE 13 SAID THE GOVERNMENT WAS FORCED TO TAKE THIS ACTION BECAUSE IT WAS APPARENT THAT THE NURSES AND THE GOVERNMENT WERE POLES APART AND NO EARLY SOLUTION WAS IN SIGHT. IN THE MEANTIME THE GOVERNMENT COULD NOT PERMIT AN INDEFINITE STRIKE IN SUCH AN ESSENTIAL SERVICE AS HOSPITALS THROUGHOUT THE RPROVINCE.

5. BOTH OPPOSITION PARTIES HAVE CONDEMNED GOVERNMENT ACTION. (AS PROPOSED LEGISLATION IS SURE TO PASS IN VIEW OF LARGE LIBERAL MAJORITY IN ASSEMBLY, THEY CAN WELL AFFORD TO OPPOSE IT TO CURRY FAVOR WITH NURSES.) JOHN BUCHANAN OF PROGRESSIVE CONSERVATIVE PARTY CALLED ON GOVERNMENT TO SIT DOWN WITH NURSES REPRESENTATIVES IN ATTEMPT TO REACH A NEGOTIATED AGREEMENT. JEREMY AKERMAN OF NEW DEMOCRATIC PARTY SAID THAT IF GOVERNMENT TRIED TO PUSH THROUGH ALL THREE STAGES (READINGS) "ALL HELL WILL BREAK LOOSE".

6. LEGISLATURE MET AGAIN AT 1000 HOURS ON JUNE 13 TO CONTINUE CONSIDERATION OF MEASURE AND HAS BEEN DOING SO FOR ENTIRE DAY. ALTHOUGH END OF DEBATE IS NOT YET IN SIGHT, IT IS EXPECTED, BARRING UNFORESEEN CIRCUMSTANCES, THAT GOVERNMENT BILL WILL PASS SECOND READING BY THIS EVENING.

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PAGE 03 HALIFA 00205 132115Z

UNCLASSIFIED

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